



HOPE COMMUNITY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2022/23 (MAY 2023)

Hello and welcome to all of our residents.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, introduced as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, that a community council must prepare and publish a report (an “annual report”) about the council's priorities, activities and achievements during that year. This is our first report which we hope you will find of interest.

There are 14 members on Hope Community Council. Councillors are office holders who sign a declaration of acceptance of office upon their election or appointment - they are therefore a part of the local government structure of Wales. Although they carry out many community activities on a voluntary basis, they are not volunteers.

At the head of the Council is the Chairman, who is elected annually from amongst its serving Councillors. The Chairman for 2022/23 was Councillor Christine Cunnah and the Vice-Chair was Councillor David Roberts.

The council has the opportunity to appoint two Youth Representatives. A Community Youth Representative represents the youth sector and is a ‘voice’ on the Community Council for local issues affecting young people. Unfortunately, at this time we do not have any Youth Representatives, but are pleased to say that Matthew Taylor who was our Youth Rep now holds office as a Councillor.

We meet formally on the first Wednesday evening of the month at 6.30pm at Heulwen Close Community Centre, Hope where there will be a hybrid provision for members and public to join remotely. These are very structured meetings with very full agendas. Anyone is welcome to observe and there is an opportunity at the start for public questions, but it is a working meeting rather than a public presentation.

Depending on what projects are being dealt with, in order to be more proactive, members may meet in between monthly meetings as a 'Working Groups' to deal with specific areas/projects to bring back to full council.

Your Community Council

The Community Council are responsible for Caergwrle Castle, Queensway play area, but also work with FCC on other playgrounds, a selection of street lighting, CCTV / crime prevention, street furniture, Christmas lights, open spaces and are a statutory consultee for many local authority and government issues including planning.

Currently, the council has four Committees; Finance, Planning & Highways, Leisure and Environment which are held on the same date as the full council meeting and the Personnel (Advisory) which is held at least once a year.

Your Community Councillors for the Year 2022/23 were:

Hope Ward

Cllr Christine Cunnah (no political affiliation)
Cllr Lynne Davies (no political affiliation)
Cllr Barry Hughes (Independent)
Cllr E Alan Parsonage (no political affiliation)
Cllr David Roberts (no political affiliation)
Cllr Myra Williams (Independent)
Cllr Christine Sheibani (Welsh Labour)
Cllr Tracey Bowgett – Co-opted (no political affiliation)

Caergwrle Ward

Cllr Matthew Taylor – Co-opted (no political affiliation)
Cllr Norman Jones – Co-opted (no political affiliation)
Cllr Jane Tilston – Co-opted (no political affiliation)
Cllr Elaine Oldham – Co-opted (Independent)
Cllr Jenny Arnold – Co-opted (no political affiliation)
Cllr John Mead – Co-opted (no political affiliation)

Message from the 2022/23 Chairman – Cllr Christine Cunnah

It has been a busy year for Hope Community Council and I would like to thank all the councillors and the clerk for ensuring that we endeavoured to meet all our objectives.

The election was disappointing in that there were no nominations for Caergwrle Ward, however within a couple of months the Council co-opted seven keen residents.

It was great to return to face to face meetings following the end of COVID restrictions, and if councillors or members of the public are unable to attend a meeting then there is still the opportunity to join in the meeting via zoom.

The community celebrated the Queen's platinum jubilee and sadly a few months later mourned her death. I believe the council served the community well for both these occasions.

The Annual reports highlights all the council's achievements and I was proud to be elected its chair for the year.

Vision Statement

To maintain and enhance the facilities, environment and historical heritage of our villages for the benefit and wellbeing of all residents. By being proactive in addressing needs and engaging with the community and other agencies the council will ensure a safe, pleasant and engaging place to live.

Elections 2022

The 2022 Welsh local elections were held on 5 May 2022 to elect members of all twenty-two local authorities in Wales and Town and Community Councils. Following changes in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 all legal residents of Wales who are aged 16 or over on polling day are eligible to vote in the local elections (16 and 17 year-olds and EU Citizens and citizens of other countries).

Unfortunately, there were only 7 nominations received for the 14 seats, with no nominations for the Ward of Caergwrle. This means the 7 nominations were elected as 'unopposed' and the council co-opted the remaining 7 vacancies.

To view details of your local Councillors, please visit our website [Hope Community Council/councillors](#)

Budget/Precept

The Council's required revenue for 2022/23 was £138,235 and the precept requirement was £113,155. Here is a brief explanation of how the precept is calculated:

The forecast expenditure for the Community Council was £111,735. In addition to this, we have to allow for having a £26,500 buffer in the bank, so the total we needed to raise is £138,235. By the end of the financial year (31 March 2022), we did not expect to have spent everything that was budgeted for in the previous year and anticipated a final balance in the bank of £19,580, plus the estimated VAT which will be reclaimed of £5,500. These two figures are taken away from the total we need to raise, leaving a balance of £113,155 to be raised via the precept. The Tax Base for the 2022-23 financial year of equivalent Band D properties is 1850.10 and the cost per Band-D property: £61.16.

At the end of the financial year 31 March 2023 the council's actual expenditure was £77,412.96.

Audits

Each year an Internal and External Audit is undertaken.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit completed 24th April 2023 was for the year ending 31 March 2023 and there was only one recommendation – *Staff costs includes a tax free allowance paid to the Clerk for home working of £312. The annual return has been updated this year to clarify that only taxable allowances are to be included within the staff costs. The annual return should be amended as follows: Staff costs £18,050, Total other payments*

59,363. This was Implemented and the annual return was amended by the Clerk prior to the certification of the annual return.

External Audit

Due to delays in Audit Wales, the council only received the 2021-22 External Audit on 9th March 2023. No recommendations or comments were received.

Once every three years Audit Wales will undertake a 'full' (in-depth) audit on all councils. Hope Community Council will be receiving a 'Full Audit' for the year 2022-23. Dates are yet to be confirmed.

Play Area Improvements

Queensway is a community council owned play area which we pay a contractor to maintain throughout the year.

The council had reserved funds to support Flintshire County Council/Aura in improvements for either Porch Lane or the Willows. Due to the demolition of the garages at Porch Lane and contaminated land assessment on the Willows, this project had been delayed. During 2022-23 the council were in a position to approve for the improvements to be made to the Willows and work is due to commence June 2023.

Caergwrle Castle

Work throughout the year involved general maintenance and upkeep, clearance of the moat and repairs to the steps which were vandalised. A contractor was appointed and undertaken bracken spraying. Chainsaw work commenced in March 2023 on the south side of the castle site.

A spate of antisocial behaviour at the castle in the May - August with small fires and broken bottles.

Flintshire Countryside Services held a story event in July, and although they had 25 booked onto the event, unfortunately, the majority cancelled before the event with one family turning up.

Street Lighting

The Council own and are responsible for a selection of street lights throughout the villages and are in a long-term scheme to have these columns upgraded and transferred back to Flintshire County Council. Any issues or faults with any street lights should be reported to Flintshire County Council, Streetscene on 01352 701234 or streetscene@flintshire.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can report by downloading the [Flintshire App](#)

Community Engagement

During the year we have been involved with a number of community engagement initiatives:

Competitions

The council held three competitions throughout the year; Hanging Basket/Planters Competition, The Scarecrow Competition and a Christmas Lights Competition.

Queens Jubilee

We asked the primary school children to draw a picture of the queen doing whatever it is that they thought she may be doing on that day. A massive thank you to all the children and the support from Abermorddu CP School who took the time to draw their wonderful pictures of the Queen (all entries can be viewed on our News & Updates page on the website).

The entries were passed to two independent judges; a local artist and a local author. They were very impressed with all the entries and had a very difficult job in choosing winners from the Infants and Juniors. Our Chairman, Cllr Christine Cunnah attended a morning assembly of Abermorddu School to present the certificate and prizes.

The council also purchased and installed bunting around various locations of the villages.

Death of Queen Elizabeth II

On 8 September 2022 at 3.10pm, Queen Elizabeth II, the longest-reigning British monarch, died at Balmoral Castle in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, at the age of 96. Her death was publicly announced at 6.30pm. The council had ensured advanced preparations were made. The Queens portrait and condolence book was made available in Heulwen Close Community Centre the following morning and was available 10.00am – 8.00pm Monday to Friday and Saturday and Sunday 10.00am - 4.00pm. A condolence book was also circulated around the local schools, local care homes and church; arrangements for the flags; the website updated including a statement from the Chair; and Council business postponed until after the period of mourning.

There were approx. 200 messages recorded in the Condolence Books which have now been transferred to the Hawarden Records Office and the Queens image was gifted to Heulwen Close Community Centre.

Christmas Lighting

There is a total of 45 bracket Christmas lights around the three villages. This year an additional 5 lights were purchased and installed on Fagl Lane.

Summer Playscheme

In conjunction with Flintshire County Council and Welsh Government, the council financial supported the provision of a 3 week summer playscheme held at The Willows Play Area.

Annual Grant Applications

The council sets a budget annually to be able to offer financial assistance to local groups and organizations. Applications usually open in October and close in November. For 2022/23 we are pleased to report that we helped 14 local groups/organisations to the sum of £4000.

CCTV

The council provides and maintains 4 x CCTV cameras, locations below. The CCTV images are only accessed and viewed by North Wale Police.

- The Willows play area Hawarden Road
- Pack Horse Bridge
- Junction of Wrexham Road & Castle Street
- Wrexham Road viewing Caergwrle Castle pathway

Telephone Kiosk

Due to valid and fiscal interests of all the residents within Hope Community Council, the council appointed Flintshire County Council in December 2022 to remove and dispose of the kiosk in Abermorddu, however, this was not removed until April 2023.

Following the removal, due to a number of factors, this caused the council to receive two formal complaints and correspondence relating to the removal. This is now still being reviewed and will be dealt with during 2023/24.

Civility & Respect Pledge

Along with many other councils across the country, Hope Community Council took the Civility and Respect Pledge:

- Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.
- Our council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors
- Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.

- Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.
- Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when it happens.
- Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme
- Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.

Police

The Community Council have always maintained strong links with North Wales Police and our Police Community Support Officers and try to obtain regularly updates on the crime statistics for our area, which are relatively low.

In total North Wales Police have 6.75 full time equivalent PCSO's and 4 Neighbourhood Police Officers. They work in line with the Police Response Team: 4 on 4 off. Days 7am – 6pm and Lates 10am – 10pm

The current PCSOs for our area are:

PCSO 3967 Helen Holden	Tel: 07890 388786	Helen.Holden@northwales.police.uk
PCSO 3463 Victoria Davies	Tel: 07989162988	Victoria.Davies@northwales.police.uk
PCSO 2926 Dan Hughes	Tel: 07896 172979	Dan.Hughes@northwales.police.uk

Key Council Objectives for the Year 2023/24

- Improvements to the castle and grounds
- Continue the street lighting upgrades
- Match funding for Willows or Porch Lane
- Continue to pursue improvements to the aesthesis of the village
- To continue to work on the removal of the Abermorddu telephone kiosk
- Continue to pursue highway and safety issues
- Investment and improvements to the Mill Gardens at Bridge End
- Improvements to public outdoor areas within our villages
- Additional Christmas lights - 6x lights for Hawarden Road (Caergwrle) and 1x extra for Fagl Lane
- Grant support for the Kings Coronation celebrations
- To hold the following: Hanging Basket/Planters Competition, Halloween House Decoration Competition (new for 2023/24) and a Christmas Lights Competition.

Budget – 2023/24

The total approved budget for 2023/24 was £148,049, with a precept request of £122,800. At the start of this financial year the council held £90,831 in reserves for incomplete, delayed or ongoing projects; Caergwrle Castle, Street Lighting upgrades and the Willow play area Match Funding.

For more information about the council, council business and to see regular updates please view our website:

<https://hopecommunitycouncil.gov.wales/> and follow us on facebook: Hope Community Council.

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